

Questions and Answers
Microgravity Flight Services Industry Day
December 18, 2014

Question #1: Is the RFI open to non-US operators?

NASA Response #1: Yes

Question #2: Are all the Performance Work Statement requirements mandatory? For instance, requirement 3.2.2 requests that the aircraft is equipped with a cargo door. Our aircraft is not equipped with a cargo door but standard passenger doors. For 17 years of operation, such door dimensions did not pose a problem to any experiment.

NASA Response #2: The requirements in the DRAFT PWS are considered mandatory; however, please tell us why you can't comply, suggest an alternate approach, and tell us why you believe the alternate approach will satisfy the intent of the original requirement.

Question #3: Is NASA's C-9B aircraft still an option for NASA Microgravity Flight Services or is NASA only looking for outsourced options?

NASA Response #3: The Government does not intend to compete with commercially capable microgravity services that meets NASA requirements. The NASA C9 aircraft will be used until a new commercial contract is available.

Question #4: The RFI requests detailed information, comparable to what could be found in a RFQ. Is there an interest for responders to reply to this RFI and not just wait for the issuance of a RFQ?

NASA Response #4: Yes. The responses to the RFI are your only opportunity to affect what requirements are eventually put into any RFP.

Question #5: How are the stated errors calculated for levels of micro-gravity accuracy and stability? Are the stated errors standard deviations at

1, 2, 3, or etc. sigma? Are these +/- limits "never to exceed" values? Etc.?

NASA Response #5: The micro-gravity levels are measured by accelerometer. The PWS defines “accuracy” and “stability” as a mean value and an absolute value respectively. The tolerance range for both is considered a “not to exceed” value.

Question #6: Are additional private meeting days possible for provider teams prior to or subsequent to the RFI due date of Jan 19th?

NASA Response #6: No additional private meeting days will be offered before the RFI due date of Jan. 19th.

Question #7: Is a 7 - 30 day extension of the RFI due date possible given existing "end of year" commitments?

NASA Response #7: We do not anticipate issuing an extension, as sufficient time is available for interested parties to respond to the RFI.

Question #8: What is the anticipated duration of the contract award? For instance, a 10-year contract with annual renewals, a fixed 5-year contract, some combination of the two?

NASA Response #8: If a solicitation is issued as a result of the responses received to the RFI, we anticipate award of multiple award IDIQ contracts with a five year contract term.

It is premature to discuss contract award. The purpose of this RFI is to obtain information on commercial sectors’ ability to conduct microgravity flight services. Based on the responses received, it will be determined if the Government will contract out for MFS.

Question #9: Is there a preferred location[WZM(1)] for micro-gravity flight operations?

NASA Response #9: No

Question #10: Are heritage sites preferred?

NASA Response #10: There is not a preference for site locations[WZM(2)].

Question #11: Can you share a draft or tentative time line for the RFP/RFQ issuance, review, and response?

NASA Response #11: We anticipate a RFP release in late March 2015 with response due in May, 2015. Contract award is anticipated to be sometime in August 2015

Question #12: Is there an anticipated page limit to the RFP response?

NASA Response #12: There is no page limit to this RFI. There is no determined page limit for an anticipated RFP at this time.

Question #13: Let me know if we should respond in details or if the information given to you in response to the Sources Sought will suffice?

NASA Response #13: This is a new request and you need to respond to the requirements in this RFI. Your sources sought will not suffice as this RFI requires information which is different than the previous sources sought.

Question #14: I am hoping to try and confirm if the work outlined in the RFI is currently being performed under any incumbent contracts with the AFRC, or if this is new work that may be procured if responses are determined to be favorable. If there is an incumbent, I am hoping to learn the name of the current vendor and the corresponding contract number.

NASA Response #14: There no incumbent contract at AFRC.

Question #15: We have two B-57 Canberras available for NASA's use. Both used to fly for NASA in 2006 and have been retired to hangar storage ever since. NASA loved them once and loves the B-57 platform. USAF always loved them. So why not give these prior NASA girls another dance?

NASA Response #15: Please provide us with your firm's proposed ability to meet the NASA requirements outlined in the RFI.

Question #16: Will it be possible to have the presentations provided after the event?

NASA Response #16: Yes, all presentations will be provided as an amendment to the RFI.

Question #17: Where do these facilities need to be located?

NASA Response #17: This draft PWS requires facilities to be provided by the provider. The location^[WZM(3)] is at the provider's discretion.

Question #18: Do you know the average length of each flight?

NASA Response #18: Flights typically last 1.5 to 2.5 hours. Historically, about 2.0 hours average. About one hour minimum on station.

Question #19: Our question is why not use public use?

NASA Response #19: This RFI is to gather information on the use of Civil Aircraft status for MFS flight operations, not Public Aircraft Status. The final method has not been decided.

Question #20: Why is there a requirement to maintain 14CFR Part 121? Clarify, if able, "IF" these flight operations could be conducted under Part 125 VS Part 121 and if NO, "why not".

NASA Response #20: 121 certification is currently specified by this PWS, however, this is a draft PWS. Please state which part you would propose to be certified under. The aircraft will have to fly under an FAA certification, except experimental, because Civil Aircraft Status is required. Also, NASA requires FAA certification to leverage the FAA maintenance reviews for NASA airworthiness purpose.

Question #21: Which Agency, the FAA or NASA, will have operational control?

NASA Response #21: The FAA will have operational control.

Question #22: Will each applicant have to present substantial data that they can and have been able to meet these specifications on their aircraft? If so, how many years (or how much data) will be required?

NASA Response #22: Substantiating data is desirable, but not required for this RFI.

Question #23: Will you provide everyone substantial and verifiable data from an aircraft platform that has accomplished these microgravity specifications?

NASA Response #23: Historical data was reviewed to arrive at the current gravity quality parameters; however, this data will not be provided for this RFI.

Question #24: Can the C-9 meet these requirements?

NASA Response #24: Yes, the C-9 can achieve the gravity level quality requirements specified in the PWS.

Question #25: Are these specifications driven by the scientists?

NASA Response #25: The gravity level quality requirements take into consideration input from the scientific community.

Question #26: How are the stated errors calculated for levels of micro-gravity accuracy and stability?

NASA Response #26: As defined in the PWS, accuracy is the average g-level value during the gravity condition. Stability is the not to exceed gravity excursion value from the average g-level during the gravity condition. The gravity levels are measured by accelerometer.

Question #27: Will NASA consider granting multiple awards and allow for customers to choose their own flight provider such as the FOP currently does with commercial rSLV's.

NASA Response #27: At this time, a multiple award is being anticipated. All Task Orders would be competed amongst IDIQ contract holders. Customers will not choose their own flight provider.

Question #28: Will NASA fund experiments funded through the FOP or through REM programs with a commercial flight provider in CY2015, provided the customer requests that specific flight provider? If so, what would need to be demonstrated to NASA prior?

NASA Response #28: This is an FOP specific question, please address this question to the FOP program office.

Question #29: Confirm that the flight operations "[Location]WZM(4)" could be, for example, KAFW Alliance Airport if the vendor facility was deemed adequate?

NASA Response #29: Yes, the PWS does not specify a location. Fort Worth Alliance could be a location given adequate access to facilities and airspace.

Question #30: Confirm that [Location]WZM(5)[WZM(6)] of Flight Operations can be at the vendors location provided the facilities are deemed adequate?

NASA Response #30: This draft PWS requires facilities to be provided by the provider. The location is at the provider's discretion.

Question #31: What is the driving force to conduct these flights FAA Commercial vice Public Use as before?

NASA Response #31: The benefits for NASA would theoretically be a reduction in the commitment of NASA assets and workforce. Also, NASA is compelled by FAR Part 12.02 to, "Acquire commercial items or nondevelopmental items when they are available to meet the needs of the agency." The intention of this RFI is to gather information to assess that we can "meet the needs of the agency" through this method.

Question #32: Can any of the flight operations be conducted under Part 135 or Part 125 vice just Part 121?

NASA Response #32: The draft PWS currently requires Part 121 or 135 certification. NASA leverages the airworthiness criteria within these FAA certifications for NASA's airworthiness oversight as required by NPR 7900.3C. If you are unable to meet this requirement, please propose an alternate certification and provide an explanation of

why the PWS requirement can't be met and why the alternate proposal is acceptable.

Question #33: Have these flights been previously conducted under Part 121 or Part 135?

NASA Response #33: No prior NASA contract has required these types of flights to be conducted under Part 121 or 135 certification because prior NASA MFS flights have been conducted as Public Aircraft Operations. This RFI seeks to gather information to determine if flights as required by the draft PWS can be conducted under Part 121 or 135.

Question #34: What FAA waivers, if any, were previously required to operate the parabolic flights?

NASA Response #34: No FAA waivers were required for contracted services. Prior NASA contractors provided MFS to NASA as Public Aircraft.

Question #35: What airworthiness category were previous aircraft operated under? Transport, utility, experimental?

NASA Response #35: NASA has not contracted for MFS under Civil Aircraft status in the past. The aircraft were operated as Public Aircraft.

Question #36: What is the proposed duration of the contract once awarded?

NASA Response #36: If a solicitation is issued as a result of the response received to the RFI we anticipate award of multiple award IDIQ contracts with a five year contract term.

It is premature to discuss contract award. The purpose of this RFI is to obtain information on commercial sectors' ability to conduct microgravity flight services. Based on the responses received, it will be determined if the Government will contract out for MFS.

Question #37: Would you be interested in part of the payload capacity being paid by commercial experiments? In other words, would NASA be interested in sharing a flight with a commercial customer for the benefit of cost sharing?

NASA Response #37:

The Draft PWS does not exclude the sharing of flights by NASA and non-NASA customers. We are interested in all possible scenarios to provide MFS. If this is proposed, please provide a full explanation of how it would be managed operationally and financially.